

## NOTICE OF PREPARATION

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**To:** Responsible and Trustee Agencies, and Office of Planning and Research.

**Subject:** Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Report for the San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area (SRA) joint General Plan and Resource Management Plan (GP/RMP). The SRA includes the O'Neill Forebay and Los Banos Creek Detention Dam and their adjacent recreation areas.

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and

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A joint programmatic Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Report (DEIS/EIR) is being prepared by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). DPR will be the Lead Agency for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Reclamation will be the Lead Agency for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

We would like to know the views of interested persons, organizations, and agencies as to the scope and content of the information to be included and analyzed in the DEIS/EIR. Agencies should comment on the elements of the environmental information that are relevant to their statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. The project description, location, and potential environmental effects of the proposed project (to the extent known) are contained in this Notice of Preparation (NOP).

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response should be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than January 3, 2003.

Please send your written response to Dennis Imhoff, CEQA Coordinator , California Department of Parks and Recreation, at the address shown above. Responses should include the name of a contact person at your agency.

**Project Title:** San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area joint General Plan and Resource Management Plan.

**Project Location:** San Luis Reservoir and O'Neill Forebay are approximately four miles west of the City of Los Banos, north and south of State Route 152, and west of its intersection with Interstate 5, in the County of Merced, California. Los Banos Creek Detention Dam is located six miles southwest of the City of Los Banos, south of State Route 152, off Canyon Road, and on the west side of Interstate 5. (see attached Project Location Map)

**Project Description:**

DPR's General Plan Unit, in conjunction with its Four Rivers District office, is in the process of developing a General Plan and EIR for San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area in accordance with Public Resources Code §5002.2 referencing General Plan guidelines and §21000 et seq. concerning the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of the General Plan is to guide future development activities and management objectives at the Park. Additionally, pursuant to the Reclamation Recreation Act of 1992, Title 28 (P.L. 102-575) and the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (CEQ) (40CFR 1500-08), Reclamation is developing a Resource Management Plan and EIS. The GP and RMP will be a joint document as the agencies are cooperating to engage in a consolidated planning process to solicit agency and stakeholder participation for both efforts simultaneously. The project areas for each plan will vary, based on differences in management and ownership, however there will be common components within the joint Plan.

The San Luis Reservoir, O'Neill Forebay and Los Banos Creek Detention Dam were built in 1962 and 1965 as part of the Central Valley Project and the California State Water Project on lands owned by Reclamation. Portions of the lands are jointly managed by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and DPR. DPR is responsible for recreation and resource management while DWR manages the water supply facilities responsible for furnishing approximately 1.25 million acre-feet of water as irrigation to various agencies.

There are additional tracts of land managed by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) in the vicinity of the San Luis Reservoir that were set aside as mitigation lands during the construction thereof. DFG managed lands will not be part of the General Plan and EIR, as DPR does not have management jurisdiction over these lands. The Federally owned lands, managed by DFG will be included in the RMP sections of the plan. The DFG managed lands owned by Reclamation are known as the San Luis Reservoir Wildlife Area and the O'Neill Forebay Wildlife Area.

Preparation of the joint General Plan and Resource Management Plan is in its early stages, so ultimate land use and resources management provisions or recommendations have not yet been determined. The lead agencies are currently in the process of evaluating existing resources and management opportunities and constraints at the SRA that will aid in the development of the GP/RMP. Known resources at the SRA include:

- Water storage, supply and distribution facilities and infrastructure;
- Plant Communities including Grassland, coastal Sage Scrub and riparian;
- Special-status wildlife species (e.g., San Joaquin kit fox, California red-legged frog);
- Culturally and historically significant areas;
- High-use recreational areas for camping, boating, fishing and swimming (e.g., San Luis Creek, Basalt, Madeiros, Dinosaur Point and Los Banos Creek);

Issues that will be considered as part of the General Plan process include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Expansion of recreational facilities (e.g., improved water system, camping facilities, rest room facilities, expanded swimming area, windsurfing safety patrol platform, marina improvements);
- Significant plant communities and wildlife habitats for San Joaquin kit fox and California red-legged frog, as well as other species of concern;
- Open space/scenic vistas;
- Water and land based recreation and sports including hiking, camping, windsurfing, fishing;
- Evaluation of archaeological/historical/cultural resources;
- Opportunities for transportation and safety improvements;
- Regional growth and planning issues;
- Interpretive and concession opportunities;
- Management constraints with regards to access to Los Banos Creek;
- Relationship to adjacent Pacheco State Park;
- Implications of potential alignments for high-speed rail facilities.

### **Potential Environmental Effects:**

Although ultimate land use and resources management provisions of the GP/RMP have not yet been determined, generally expected types of environmental impacts that may occur as a result of the GP/RMP can be identified. Based on the resource characteristics of the SRA and generally

anticipated uses, potential environmental effects that will likely be addressed in the EIS/EIR, include:

- Potential conflicts between sensitive wildlife species/natural communities (e.g., San Joaquin kit fox corridor protection and facility development);
- Potential for development of telecommunications structures (cell towers) on Federally-owned lands affecting ecological and scenic resources;
- Potential for substantial adverse change in the visual character of portions of the project area due to the placement of additional facilities;
- Transportation impacts associated with safety for ingress and egress.

While potential take of threatened and endangered species is not anticipated, the EIR/EIS will describe future State and Federal consultation and permit requirements that may be required for facility development as necessary.

#### **Intended Use of the EIR/EIS:**

DPR and the Parks and Recreation Commission and Reclamation will use the EIS/EIR component of the GP/RMP to consider the environmental effects, mitigation measures, and alternatives, when reviewing the proposed Plan for approval. The EIR/EIS will serve as the State's CEQA compliance document for adoption of the General Plan and as Reclamation's NEPA compliance document for adoption of the Resource Management Plan. It will also serve as the programmatic environmental document that may be referenced in implementing future actions included in the GP/RMP. Responsible agencies may also use the EIR as needed for subsequent discretionary actions.

#### **Scoping Meeting:**

Saturday, January 11, 2003  
10:00 am. – 2:00 pm  
Four Rivers District Office  
31426 Gonzaga Road  
Gustine, CA, 95322

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State Parks CEQA Coordinator, Four Rivers District

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Date

**Attachments:** NOP Distribution List; Project Location Map